

Random Encounters

Pets of Any Stripe

By Robert Wiese



Skye's Animal Companions

Skye's Animal Companions is a pet shop located in a large city with a bustling merchant trade, but it is a far from ordinary pet shop. Signs outside the shop promise that Skye's can provide "any and every kind of pet you can possibly imagine." This is much truer than anyone would ever guess. The shop is the brainchild of Celeste Blue-Skye, a young con artist with a knack for making money in creative ways. Her partner, Maephus Ibonn, is a transmuter, and the reason that Skye's Animal Companions is such a success.

As advertised, Skye's sells every kind of animal that one could want as a pet. Dogs, especially trained ones, are a mainstay of the business, but the shop also sells cats, rats, mice, a variety of snakes and exotic reptiles, birds, and hunting cats. A variety of horses are available, and they are trained for every task from pulling wagons to fighting. In addition, the shop features exotic creatures from far-away lands. In this category, the perennial favorites are monkeys, and the shop carries a selection ranging from chimps to golden lion tamarinds (very beautiful, but very expensive). Celeste takes orders for unique pets, showing interested clients a book with illustrations and pertinent facts of animals that she claims come from extremely far away locations and very rare, too.

Pets from Skye's Animal Companions are not cheap. Celeste charges as much as she can, especially for the exotic pets and the big cats. For common pets, her prices are competitive with those listed in the *Player's Handbook*. For the rest, Celeste sets her own prices, which are often based on what she thinks the buyer can afford. She rarely negotiates and almost never lowers her prices more than 10%. Dogs and horses come with guarantees of pedigree in many cases. Training can be arranged as well; training fees are set at 25% of the price or value of the animal (whichever is greater).

The secret behind the success is that the normal cost of acquiring these rare and valuable animals has been, for the most part, eliminated. Maephus Ibonn uses spells to transform common animals into rare ones, such as transforming a rat into a "rainbow fan monkey," which is a rare small monkey with a colored fan-shaped hood of skin around its head. For this work, he uses new spells that he created to transform the minds of animals into those of other animals. The common animals are actually purchased from breeders, or raised, and the two have established a ranch outside the city where they breed the results of the transformation spells to create true animals of those types. Originally, Celeste planned to sell the transformed animals, but the cost of permanent transformations is very high, so the pair find it more economical to transform a couple of animals and breed them if the animal type is frequently requested.

Celeste salves her conscience by using strays and other unwanted animals for the transformations. Thus, she sees herself as giving unwanted animals homes where they will be loved or appreciated. She would never make an animal unhappy through this process, and once their minds are transformed, they are happy in their new forms. The best part of this scheme, according to Celeste, is that it is all perfectly legal. She makes sure that all her animals are licensed properly, and it is not fraud to sell something represented as a rainbow fan monkey if it really is one (even if it wasn't one before).

The owners of Skye's Animal Companions try to keep secret the fact that some of their animals used to be other animals. They do not fear legal repercussion, but Celeste is aware that the public mentality is a strange thing. It is possible that if someone bought a golden lion tamarind and he knew that it used to be a rat, he would never see it as anything other than a rat and the pet would be rejected. To keep the masquerade, Celeste refers to "field agents" who travel the world and bring her the exotic animals when needed, or who arrange to have them transported to her shop. These people don't exist. Celeste did at one time employ some rangers to find animals, but those were the days when she was building her catalog and did not know what was out there.

Skye's Animal Companions owns two premises: a large two-story shop in the city and the ranch outside the city. The ranch serves as breeding farm, training facility, and sales floor for the larger, dangerous animals. The shop is home to the main business and all of the smaller animals. The upstairs is devoted to birds, reptiles and fish, and the ground floor is for mammals. This arrangement helps to sell a lot of monkeys and puppies, which are placed to catch the eyes of browsers. A staff of four assists with sales and cares for the animals there.

Bring the Parts Together

Although random encounters usually happen by chance, some DMs may wish to tie these five parts together into something that could lead to further adventures. Part Five of the series will contain some interesting ideas for introducing a "transformed pets" business into your campaign.

Coming in Part 2 of Pets of Any Stripe

Find out more about Celeste, the proprietor of the store.



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